

May 15, 2003

TO: Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Chair  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: James E. Hartl, AICP  
Director of Planning

**SUBJECT: REPORT TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON ZONING STUDY OF  
THE SAWTELLE DISTRICT (VETERANS ADMINISTRATION AND ARMY  
RESERVE PROPERTIES) IN WEST LOS ANGELES**

### **BOARD REQUEST**

At your meeting on February 11, 2003, your Board unanimously approved a motion by Supervisor Yaroslavsky that directed the Department of Regional Planning to initiate a zoning study of the Sawtelle District in West Los Angeles. This letter has the purpose of reporting our progress.

### **BACKGROUND**

The unincorporated community of Sawtelle is located in the Third Supervisorial District. First selected in 1888 as the site for a veteran's home and veteran's cemetery, the project area has by and large remained in federal ownership. The present Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital building, located south of Wilshire Boulevard, was opened in 1977. The Los Angeles National Cemetery, located along Sepulveda Boulevard, contains the remains of approximately 85,000 veterans and family members from the Mexican-American War to the present. Veterans have received care and housing on site continuously for nearly 115 years.

### **EXISTING ZONING AND GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATIONS**

The existing zoning for the Sawtelle area was first established December 2, 1960, with the adoption of an ordinance adding District No. 124 to the county Zoning Ordinance. The District consists entirely of Zone R-4 (Unlimited Residence). Zone R-4 allows density up to 50 dwelling units per acre. The zoning has never been changed.

The study area is not included within the boundaries of an area-wide or community plan. The 1980 Countywide General Plan depicts the portion north of Wilshire Boulevard within the Open Space classification and the portion south of Wilshire Boulevard within the Public and Semi-Public Facilities classification. (See Attachment)

### **ISSUES AND CONCERNS**

Our preliminary analysis has brought to light the following issues and concerns:

- ?? Zone R-4 is inconsistent with both the Open Space and the Public and Semi-Public Facilities land use categories. State law requires the zoning to be consistent with the adopted General Plan.
- ?? The urban community surrounding Sawtelle District consists mainly of low- and medium-density residential and general commercial uses. Development under Zone R-4 would be incompatible with these surrounding uses.
- ?? The study area has been developed primarily with public and semi-public facilities, and with many open space uses. These existing uses are far less intense than what current zoning would allow.
- ?? Zone R-4 does not require public review for many projects often considered high-intensity uses, such as multi-family residential, churches and schools.

### **REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION INPUT**

After staff presented materials on April 23, 2003, the Commission unanimously approved (4-0, Commissioner Modugno absent) a motion directing us to prepare a zone change and associated environmental documents, and to prepare any necessary amendments to the provisions of Zones O-S and IT.

### **OUTREACH**

Six of the seven study-area parcels are owned by either the US Government or the State of California. A private utility company owns one parcel. Staff met with federal representatives and discussed the purpose for the zoning study. Staff mailed contact letters to the remaining property owners. Contact letters have also been mailed to local government officials and community groups in the surrounding City of Los Angeles, inviting their input.

### **CONTINUING EFFORTS**

We will continue to gather information and comments for the zoning study. Also, we are available to meet directly with property owners, local government representatives and interested community groups. The issues and concerns noted in this report and provided by the public will be addressed in the study. The Regional Planning Commission will conduct a public hearing on June 25, 2003, and will make a recommendation to your Board.

Should you have any comments or questions regarding the Sawtelle District Zoning Study, please do not hesitate to call me or David Cowardin of my staff at 213/974-6422, Monday through Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Our offices are closed on Friday.

JEH:RDH:DC:GMN

C: Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

April 23, 2003

TO: Harold V. Helsley, Chair  
Esther L. Valadez, Commissioner  
Leslie G. Bellamy, Commissioner  
Wayne Rew, Commissioner  
Pat Modugno, Commissioner

FROM: David Cowardin  
Regional Planner

**SUBJECT: SAWTELLE DISTRICT ZONING STUDY**

At its meeting held February 11, 2003, the Board of Supervisors adopted a motion requesting your commission and the Director of Planning, with support from other County departments as necessary, to initiate a zoning study of the Veterans Administration and US Army Reserve properties in West Los Angeles and to coordinate with the Federal government and the City of Los Angeles for the purpose of determining the appropriate zoning to ensure that further private development in the area is sensitive to and compatible with surrounding neighborhoods, and to provide a progress report to the Board within 120 days.

- ?? The project area is located in the Third Supervisorial District (West Los Angeles) and consists of seven parcels covering approximately 576.5 acres
- ?? Current zoning, established in 1960, is R-4 (Unlimited Residential) and allows up to 50 dwelling units per acre
- ?? General Plan land use categories, designated in 1980, are Open Space and Public and Semi-Public Facilities
- ?? Unlimited residential uses are not compatible with the objectives of either the Open Space or Public and Semi-Public classifications
- ?? A private developer is in discussions with federal representatives for a high-density residential project in the Sawtelle District
- ?? Current zoning would not subject a high-density residential development to public discussion
- ?? Existing land uses are primarily public- and semi-public facilities, and open space
- ?? Surrounding community land uses are primarily low- and medium-density residential
- ?? All property owners are public or quasi-public agencies
- ?? **Staff is considering** O-S (Open-Space) zoning for lands in the Open Space category, and IT (Institutional) zoning for lands in the Public and Semi-Public Facilities category
- ?? **Staff is considering** amendments to Zones O-S and IT that would add publicly-owned uses and nonprofit organizations providing services to the surrounding community as allowable uses

Sawtelle District Zoning Study  
Item for Discussion, 23 April 2003  
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Based on the above facts, staff requests that your Commission initiate a zone change in order to bring the zoning consistent with the General Plan.

If you have any questions regarding this material, please call me or Gina M. Natoli of my staff at 213/974-6422, Monday through Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Our offices are closed on Friday.

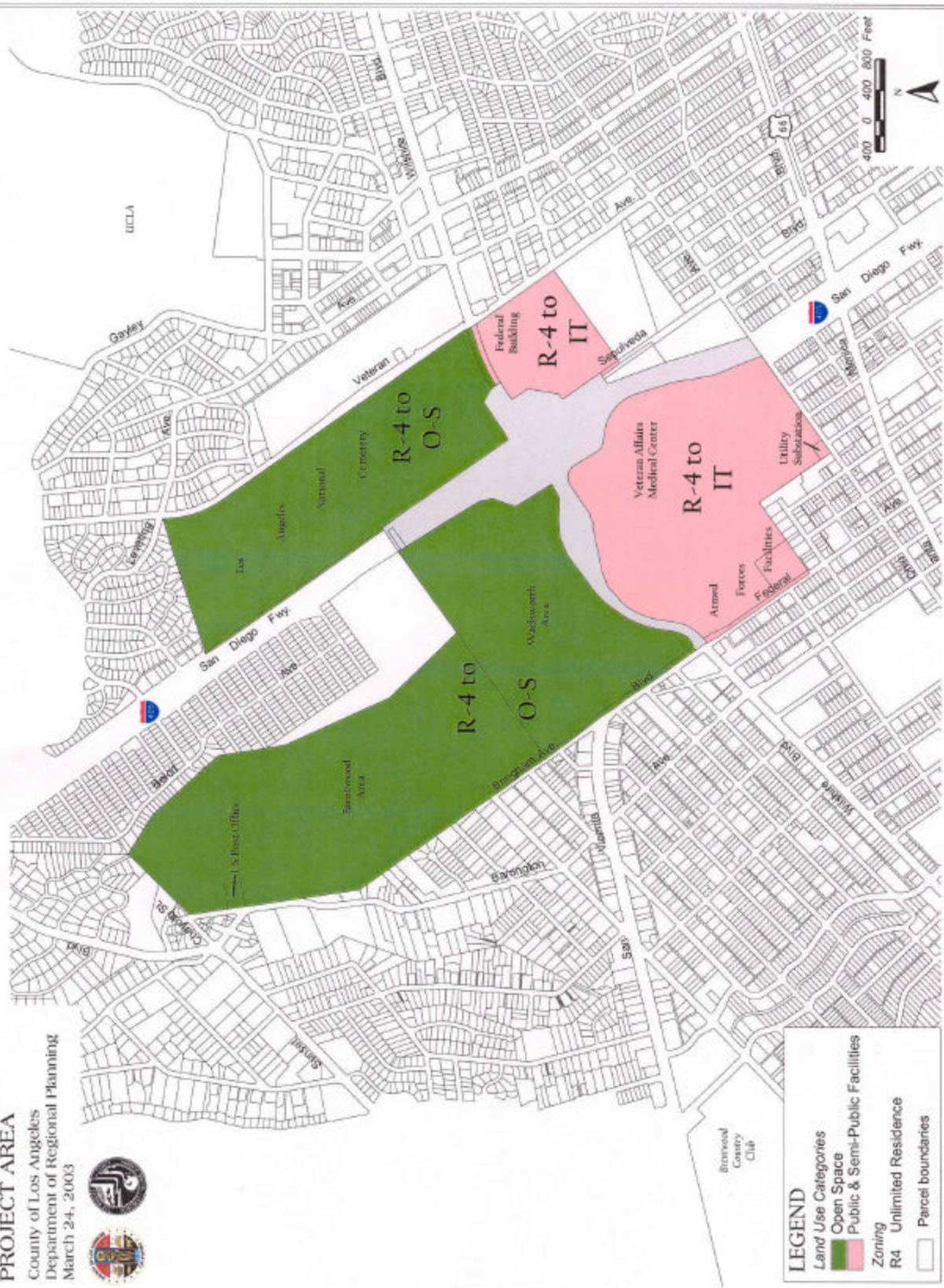
DC:gmh

Attachments

- Map – Project Area
- Map – Zoning, Los Angeles County and City of Los Angeles
- Map – Land Use, Los Angeles County and City of Los Angeles
- Photographs of project area
- Board of Supervisors motion, 11 February 2003, directing study

# SAWTELLE DISTRICT ZONING STUDY PROJECT AREA

County of Los Angeles  
Department of Regional Planning  
March 24, 2003



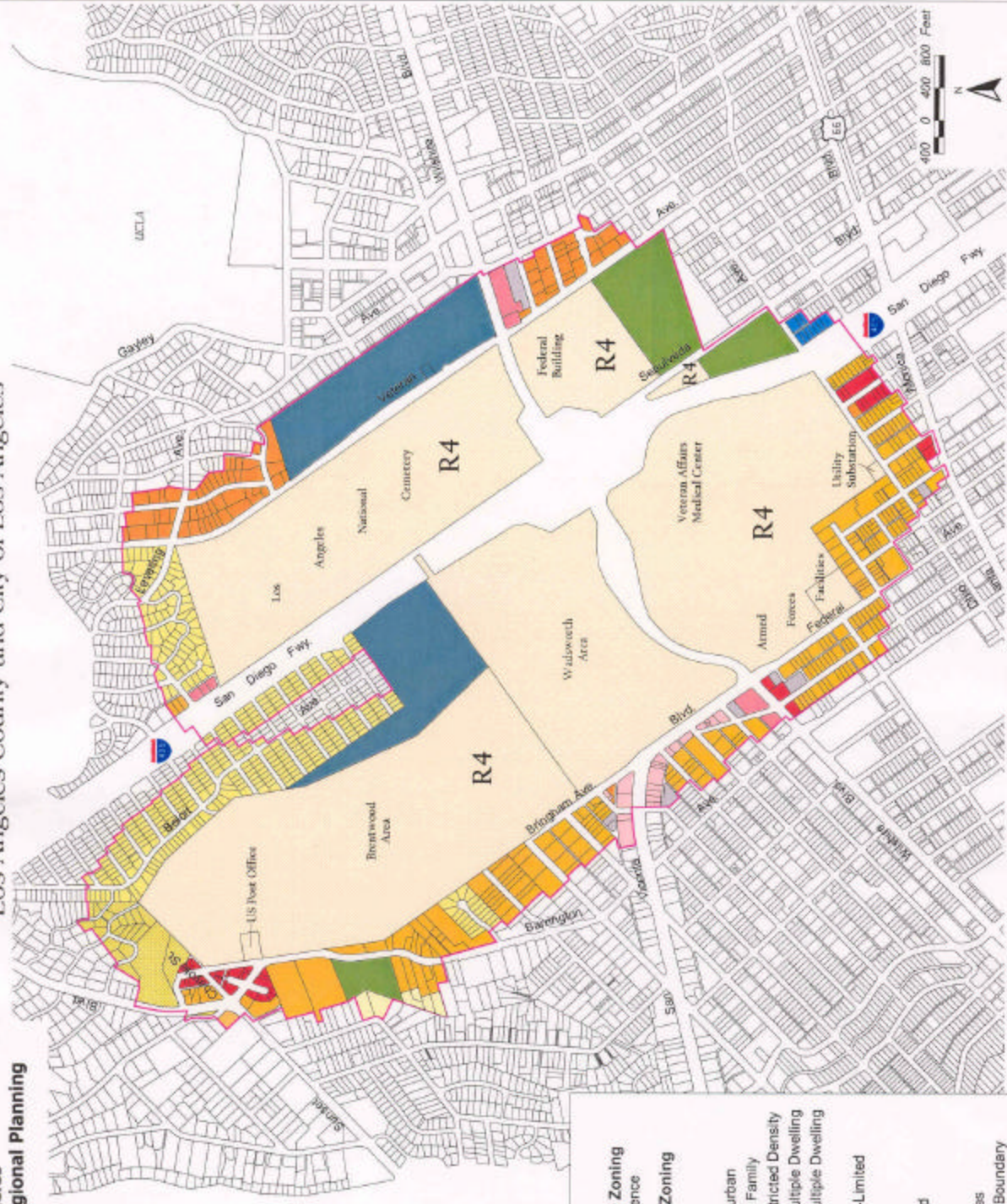
**LEGEND**  
**Land Use Categories**  
 Open Space  
 Public & Semi-Public Facilities  
**Zoning**  
 R4 Unlimited Residence  
 Parcel boundaries





**SAWTELLE DISTRICT ZONING STUDY**  
**County of Los Angeles**  
**Department of Regional Planning**  
**March 24, 2003**

**ZONING**  
**Los Angeles County and City of Los Angeles**



- LEGEND**
- Los Angeles County Zoning**
- Unlimited Residence
- City of Los Angeles Zoning**
- Open Space
  - Residential
  - Residential-Suburban
  - Residential-One Family
  - Residential-Restricted Density
  - Residential-3-Multiple Dwelling
  - Residential-4-Multiple Dwelling
  - Parking
  - Commercial 1.5-Limited
  - Commercial 4
  - Commercial 2
  - Industrial-Limited
  - Public Facilities
- Parcel boundaries  
 600-foot Notice Boundary